

A Week of Tension in Cuba

Havana Like a Busy Beehive Until Kennedy Calmed Fears

By Bjorn Ahlander

Washington correspondent for the Swedish Broadcasting Corp., Ahlander went to Cuba early in October to report the situation for his listeners. When Cuba was quarantined he was taken off the air and arrested. He finally got away from the island on a Swedish freighter bound for Canada.

A WEEK BEFORE the American blockade of Cuba, confidence was the dominant mood in Havana. The visit of Algerian leader Ben Bella was interpreted as a historic event, and many Cuban leaders were convinced that the Afro-Asians were showing more support for their policy.

The weekend of Oct. 21 was delightful. People flocked to bars and restaurants even though there was little or nothing to eat. They could always drink Cuba Libres and enjoy Caribbean rumba rhythms.

THE TIME has not yet come to tell the story of President Kennedy's visit to the home of Justice Frankfurter, just before he left the court. He knew Mr. Kennedy long before the President entered the White House, and it was no new experience for Frankfurter to be speaking with easy intimacy to the leader of the American people. But this particular visit has cleaved in Frankfurter's mind.

But he never wearied in the search for objective and accurate judgment, sustained by innumerable legal scholar-ship, and in making its part appeal to the will of the Supreme Court he never made sense of the American community when prejudice has been revised by justice. He may not always have succeeded in this quest, but he has left his work as a monument and as a guide; and the spirit which sustained the work is in many ways the most precious gift to the American Nation which has loved so faithfully and served with such distinction.

"Americans want to do?" I asked.

"Maybe they are interested in our nuclear weapons," he said with a smile.

"Do you have any?"

"Can you conceive of Cuba as a nuclear power?" he asked laughing. Then he suddenly changed the topic of conversation.

FROM THE beginning the Cubans rejected the possibility of a deal between the United States and the Soviet Union. The deal we had in mind at that time was an agreement linking Cuba and Berlin.

"We are not a pawn in the game," the Cubans repeated. "We will never accept being treated like one. What is at stake is the freedom, and independence of Cuba, which we will fight for!"

Monday afternoon the tension spread to the entire city. Groups of people gathered on street corners, in

did Castro appear on television. He had very little to say. Slowly people in Havana began to realize that their city was no longer the center of the storm and that the crucial decisions from now on were to be made outside Cuba.

THE LEADERS in Havana were worried by the lack of support for Cuba, not only in Latin America but in Moscow. The radio stations were given orders to produce overwhelming evidence of support from all corners of the world. Every resolution passed anywhere by supporters of Cuba was read again and again by the announcers and reprinted in the papers.

An "International Brigade" from 24 countries was formed to fight for Cuba—but I know for a fact that the "West German contingent" consisted of not more than one or two Communist students.

"Amigos de Cuba"—a group of American Communists and

Frankfurter's philosophy. He thought the urgent loyalties of the challenge brought countless and unquenchable. His passion for freedom was on the court. By contrast, Frankfurter placed himself under a more austere rule of self-denial.

The appeal of Israel as a Jewish home never lost its hold on Frankfurter's loyalty. But in all his long years on the Supreme Court he never once, by public word or private deed, entered into the public controversy that has often raged over the destiny of Israel. This self-restraint was in marked contrast to the conduct of Justice Brandeis who went to the White House many times to discuss the country's policies toward Great Britain.

But his private files show that many men and women, quite unknown to fame, owe to his aroused compassion the chance to re-fashion broken lives in freedom and dignity. He was interested in human suffering which sent him into action, and in the struggle against tyranny his passion for freedom was on the court. By contrast, Frankfurter placed himself under a more austere rule of self-denial.

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